

National Security Personnel System Guide for Identifying Contributing Factors

Contributing factors are sets of work behaviors that are related to and impact the performance of a job objective. When selecting the contributing factors for each job objective, the supervisor should only select those that add sufficient assessment information to impact a particular job objective and reflect the manner of performance important for the accomplishment of the job objective. The selection of contributing factors should not be based on the strengths or weaknesses of the employee performing the job. Generally, no more than three contributing factors should be identified for each job objective.

Employees in the same organization (e.g., work unit, pay pool, etc.) with similar job objectives and base salary should be assigned similar contributing factors, as appropriate. Contributing factors and job objectives are communicated to employees prior to holding them accountable for the work behaviors. Contributing factors are assigned and documented in the employee's performance plan. The NSPS contributing factors are provided below.

NSPS Contributing Factors

- Technical Proficiency
- Critical Thinking
- Cooperation and Teamwork
- Communication
- Customer Focus
- Resource Management
- Leadership *

Contributing factors and their impact on the accomplishment of the job objective are evaluated using benchmark descriptors appropriate for the employee's pay schedule and pay band. Each NSPS position associates to one of three sets of contributing factors:

- Professional/Analytical
- Supervisor/Manager
- Technical/Support

With few exceptions the contributing factors available for selection will match the pay schedule and band to which the employee is assigned. Benchmarks are described at the "Expected" performance and "Enhanced" performance levels for each contributing factor. When assessing the contributing factors, supervisors should consider the selected factors as a whole, or in the aggregate, as they apply to the job objective.

* The "leadership" contributing factor may be assigned to any employee who is responsible for directing work and developing other employees. The "leadership" contributing factor must be selected for the supervisory job objective assigned to employees performing supervisory duties (regardless of pay schedule classification). This contributing factor may be selected for a supervisor's other job objectives, as appropriate.

Based on the supervisor's overall assessment of the selected contributing factor(s), the supervisor will determine their influence on the associated job objective and indicate whether they increase the job objective rating by a factor of 1, decrease the rating by a factor of 1, or have no effect (0). The assessment of the contributing factors will be reflected in accordance with the table provided below.

CONTRIBUTING FACTOR IMPACT	DESCRIPTORS
+1	In the execution/accomplishment of the assigned job objective, the employee demonstrated a manner of performance matching or exceeding the description provided in the Enhanced benchmark descriptor(s).
0 (Neutral)	In the execution/accomplishment of the assigned job objective, the employee demonstrated a manner of performance matching or exceeding the description provided in the Expected benchmark descriptor(s) but below that described by the Enhanced benchmark descriptor(s).
-1	In the execution/accomplishment of the assigned job objective, the employee demonstrated a manner of performance below the description provided in the Expected benchmark descriptor(s).

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of work behaviors and benchmark descriptors for specific contributing factors, pay bands, and pay schedules are below.

Example #1

John is a Program Analyst, YA-0343, Pay Band 2, in the Standard Career Group. He does not perform supervisory duties.

For one of John's job objectives his supervisor selects Technical Proficiency and Customer Focus as contributing factors.

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|-----------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Technical Proficiency | <input type="checkbox"/> Communication |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Critical Thinking | <input type="checkbox"/> Cooperation and Teamwork |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Customer Focus | <input type="checkbox"/> Resource Management |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Leadership | |

The work behaviors and benchmark descriptors for Technical Proficiency and Customer Focus for John's Pay Band and Pay Schedule are below:

Technical Proficiency (Professional/Analytical Pay Schedules)	
Work Behaviors	
Demonstrates and applies relevant and appropriate knowledge and skills to perform work activities. Stays up-to-date in professional/technical specialties. Acquires, develops, and maintains relevant and appropriate job skills through training or other developmental activities. Uses appropriate and available technology or tools to perform work activities. Demonstrates an understanding of the organization's mission, functions, values, and applicable policies and procedures. Develops and maintains an awareness of internal/external factors affecting the organization or specific work assignments.	
Benchmarks for Pay Band 2	
<i>Expected</i>	
Applies substantive knowledge and skills (including use of appropriate technology or tools) to independently perform a full range of assignments, including moderately complex work activities; seeks occasional guidance as appropriate. Acquires, develops, and maintains relevant job skills through a variety of methods. Stays up-to-date in professional/technical specialties and applies this knowledge to improve own performance and contribute to work unit performance. Demonstrates a thorough understanding of the organization's mission, functions, values, applicable policies and procedures, and internal and external factors that affect the organization; seeks out opportunities to use this knowledge constructively to contribute to organizational objectives and priorities.	
<i>Enhanced</i>	
Additions at the Enhanced level:	
Applies depth and breadth of knowledge to independently perform well on the most complex or varied assignments at this level. Takes initiative to improve technical knowledge and skills through a variety of self-directed development activities, resulting in an increased ability to contribute to the mission. Is frequently consulted by others because of depth and/or breadth of understanding of the organization and the internal and external factors that affect it; seeks out and capitalizes on opportunities to use this knowledge to contribute to organizational goals and outcomes.	
Customer Focus (Professional/Analytical Pay Schedules)	

Work Behaviors
Effectively identifies and assesses customer requirements. Effectively manages customer expectations and addresses questions and concerns. Provides timely, flexible, and responsive service to customers.
Benchmarks for Pay Band 2
<p><i>Expected</i></p> <p>Maintains regular contact with customers to gather information about their requirements and needs and delivers timely, flexible, and responsive products and/or services to meet those needs. Discusses expectations with customers to ensure mutual understanding and acceptance; keeps customers and relevant others informed of progress, issues, and/or problems that could impede progress and suggests workable solutions. Responds to questions or requests from customers in a timely manner.</p>
<p><i>Enhanced</i></p> <p>Additions at the Enhanced level: Develops innovative and useful suggestions for designing and adapting customer-focused products and/or services. Correctly anticipates customer needs and resolves or avoids potential problems, resulting in improved overall customer satisfaction.</p>

Example #2

Jennifer is a Program Analyst, YA-0343, Pay Band 3, in the Standard Career Group. She does not perform supervisory duties.

For one of Jennifer's job objectives her supervisor selects Technical Proficiency and Customer Focus as contributing factors.

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|-----------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Technical Proficiency | <input type="checkbox"/> Communication |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Critical Thinking | <input type="checkbox"/> Cooperation and Teamwork |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Customer Focus | <input type="checkbox"/> Resource Management |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Leadership | |

The work behaviors and benchmark descriptors for Technical Proficiency and Customer Focus for Jennifer's Pay Band and Pay Schedule are below:

Technical Proficiency (Professional/Analytical Pay Schedules)	
Work Behaviors	
Demonstrates and applies relevant and appropriate knowledge and skills to perform work activities. Stays up-to-date in professional/technical specialties. Acquires, develops, and maintains relevant and appropriate job skills through training or other developmental activities. Uses appropriate and available technology or tools to perform work activities. Demonstrates an understanding of the organization's mission, functions, values, and applicable policies and procedures. Develops and maintains an awareness of internal/external factors affecting the organization or specific work assignments.	
Benchmarks for Pay Band 3	
<i>Expected</i> Applies expert-level knowledge and skills (including use of appropriate technology or tools) to perform a wide range of highly complex work activities. Maintains technical expertise by keeping up-to-date with the latest developments in professional/technical specialties. Applies expert-level knowledge to improve own and organizational performance. Demonstrates an extensive understanding of the organization's mission, functions, values, applicable policies and procedures, and internal and external factors that impact programs that extend across components or throughout a component/command or an equivalent organization; seeks out and capitalizes on opportunities to use this knowledge to help the organization accomplish its mission and move toward its long-term vision.	
<i>Enhanced</i> Additions at the Enhanced level: Is frequently consulted for depth and/or breadth of expertise to handle the most complex and difficult assignments at this level. Continually strives to broaden and enhance expertise, resulting in contributions that significantly advance key organizational goals and objectives. Is widely recognized for his or her expertise regarding organizational systems and internal and external factors impacting programs that extend across components or throughout a component/command or an equivalent organization; seeks out and capitalizes on opportunities to leverage this knowledge to make contributions with far-ranging impact.	

Customer Focus (Professional/Analytical Pay Schedules)	
Work Behaviors	
Effectively identifies and assesses customer requirements. Effectively manages customer expectations and addresses questions and concerns. Provides timely, flexible, and responsive service to customers.	
Benchmarks for Pay Band 3	
<i>Expected</i> Proactively communicates with customers to help define their needs and obtain feedback; strives to continually enhance products and/or services. Works with customers to set mutually acceptable expectations (e.g., timelines and deliverables); informs customers or relevant others of progress, changes, issues, or problems that could affect progress and develops effective solutions to address them. Provides timely, flexible, innovative, and responsive products and/or services to customers, resulting in high overall customer satisfaction.	
<i>Enhanced</i> Additions at the Enhanced level: Develops innovative and useful approaches for improving or expanding products and/or services, resulting in highly valued services that improve overall customer satisfaction. Takes initiative to anticipate and implement effective solutions to prevent problems, thus avoiding gaps in customer expectations.	

Example #3

Sally is a supervisory Public Affairs Specialist, YC- 1035, in Pay Band 2, in the Standard Career Group.

For one of Sally's job objectives her supervisor selects Communication and Cooperation/Teamwork as contributing factors.

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|--------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Technical Proficiency | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Communication |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Critical Thinking | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cooperation and Teamwork |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Customer Focus | <input type="checkbox"/> Resource Management |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Leadership [†] | |

The work behaviors and benchmark descriptors for Communication and Cooperation and Teamwork for Sally's Pay Band and Pay Schedule are below:

Communication (Supervisor/Manager Pay Schedules)
Work Behaviors
Actively listens and appropriately responds to the questions, ideas, and concerns of others. Writes in an accurate, clear, concise, well-organized, and timely manner. Orally communicates in an accurate, clear, concise, well-organized, and timely manner. Tailors communication (e.g., language, tone, level of specificity) to the audience's level of understanding and to the communication medium and any adaptive technologies needed for accommodation of persons with disabilities. Actively/consistently communicates agency affirmative employment program objectives/programs to unique work unit customers and to the general public.
Benchmarks for Pay Band 2
<i>Expected</i> Seeks and actively listens to others' questions, ideas, and concerns; shows respect for and carefully considers diverse viewpoints and crafts clear and organized responses, following up to ensure understanding. Communicates complex or sensitive information in an accurate, clear, concise, well-organized, and timely manner; written communications require minimal revisions. Tailors communication style (e.g., language, tone, and format) and content to meet the audience's needs and level of understanding; takes into consideration political, environmental, and resource implications. Effectively explains or defends relevant viewpoints when necessary.
<i>Enhanced</i> Additions at the Enhanced level: Adeptly reads complex social interactions and nonverbal cues and adjusts own behavior to communicate more effectively with others. Prepares and delivers communications that are of exceptional quality as recognized by peers, supervisors, and/or customers. Skillfully communicates complex information to a range of audiences in a manner that enhances their understanding and acceptance of the information.

[†] The "leadership" contributing factor must be selected for the supervisory job objective assigned to employees performing supervisory duties (regardless of pay schedule classification). This contributing factor may be selected for a supervisor's other job objectives, as appropriate.

Cooperation and Teamwork (Supervisor/Manager Pay Schedules)	
Work Behaviors	
Develops and maintains effective working relationships with others. Respects and values individual differences and diversity by treating everyone fairly and professionally. Contributes to organizational or institutional knowledge by sharing information with others. Contributes to a positive team atmosphere that fosters cooperation, trust, and group identity. Collaborates effectively with others to resolve disagreements or conflicts in a positive and constructive manner.	
Benchmarks for Pay Band 2	
<i>Expected</i> Contributes to achieving work unit objectives by demonstrating cooperative behaviors and building effective partnerships across units. Treats everyone fairly and professionally, respecting and valuing individual differences and diversity; provides guidance to others on respectful behavior. Encourages and promotes knowledge and skill sharing within the work unit. Effectively handles disagreements or conflicts, including those that are challenging, and resolves them in a positive and constructive manner. Respects and valued individual differences, values and diversity, promoting inclusiveness and supporting accomplishments of persons with disabilities. Develops work unit objectives/activities that implement/support agency affirmative employment objectives.	
<i>Enhanced</i> Additions at the Enhanced level: Takes initiative to make extra contributions to work unit efforts; recognizes when others need assistance and provides support to advance unit goals beyond what is expected. Builds a climate of cooperation and trust by demonstrating behavior that clearly shows respect for and value of individual differences and diversity. Seeks out opportunities to increase knowledge and skill transfer in the work unit.	

Example #4

Steve is an Engineering Technician, YB-0802, Pay Band 1, in the Scientific & Engineering Career Group. He does not perform supervisory duties.

For one of Steve's job objectives his supervisor selects Technical Proficiency, Critical Thinking and Resource Management as contributing factors.

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|-----------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Technical Proficiency | <input type="checkbox"/> Communication |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Critical Thinking | <input type="checkbox"/> Cooperation and Teamwork |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Customer Focus | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Resource Management |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Leadership | |

The work behaviors and benchmark descriptors for Technical Proficiency, Critical Thinking, and Resource Management for Steve's Pay Band and Pay Schedule are below:

Technical Proficiency (Technician/Support Pay Schedules)	
Work Behaviors	
Demonstrates and applies relevant and appropriate knowledge and skills to perform work activities. Stays up-to-date and acquires new job-relevant knowledge and skills by participating in training or other learning activities. Uses appropriate and available technology or tools to perform work activities. Demonstrates an understanding of how relevant organizational systems and processes affect own work. Maintains an awareness of current events and other external factors that may affect work.	
Benchmarks for Pay Band 1	
Expected With guidance, applies basic know perform straightforward or well-defined work activities. As directed, acquires, develops, and maintains relevant job skills and required certifications through a variety of methods and applies this knowledge to improve own performance. Demonstrates a basic understanding of relevant systems, processes, and procedures that affect own work; applies this knowledge constructively when completing own assignments.	
Enhanced Additions at the Enhanced level: Applies knowledge to perform more advanced tasks with minimal supervision. Takes initiative to improve technical knowledge and skills through a variety of self-directed development activities, resulting in an increased ability to contribute to the mission.	

Critical Thinking (Technician/Support Pay Schedules)
Work Behaviors
<p>Gathers, organizes, and maintains relevant information.</p> <p>Analyzes information to draw sound conclusions.</p> <p>Identifies problems and generates solutions.</p> <p>Makes reasonable and timely decisions or recommendations.</p> <p>Identifies and utilizes innovative or creative methods to accomplish work assignments.</p>
Benchmarks for Pay Band 1
<p><i>Expected</i></p> <p>With guidance, gathers relevant information or data needed to complete assignments; organizes and maintains information according to established procedures.</p> <p>Evaluates information against standard procedures and guidelines to identify obvious issues or problems.</p> <p>Brings problems to the attention of senior staff/supervisor.</p> <p>With guidance, makes logical decisions regarding routine issues that arise in carrying out instructions.</p>
<p><i>Enhanced</i></p> <p>Additions at the Enhanced level:</p> <p>Takes initiative to identify additional sources of information beyond what would be expected for this level.</p> <p>Anticipates when standard procedures may not work in accomplishing own assignments and takes initiative to suggest alternatives.</p>

Resource Management (Technician/Support Pay Schedules)
Work Behaviors
<p>Maintains an awareness of available resources and the process for acquiring needed resources.</p> <p>Identifies and advocates for resources required to accomplish work activities or projects.</p> <p>Makes effective and efficient use of available resources.</p> <p>Safeguards available resources to prevent fraud, waste, and abuse.</p> <p>Complies with workplace safety and security requirements.</p>
Benchmarks for Pay Band 1
<p><i>Expected</i></p> <p>Demonstrates a basic awareness of available resources and the process for acquiring resources needed to accomplish own work.</p> <p>With guidance, requests basic resources needed to perform own work; uses resources in a manner that safeguards against fraud, waste, and abuse.</p> <p>Properly follows all workplace safety and security procedures.</p>
<p><i>Enhanced</i></p> <p>Additions at the Enhanced level:</p> <p>Takes initiative to learn as much as possible about available resources and the process for acquiring them.</p> <p>Makes useful suggestions for increasing efficiency in the use of resources.</p>